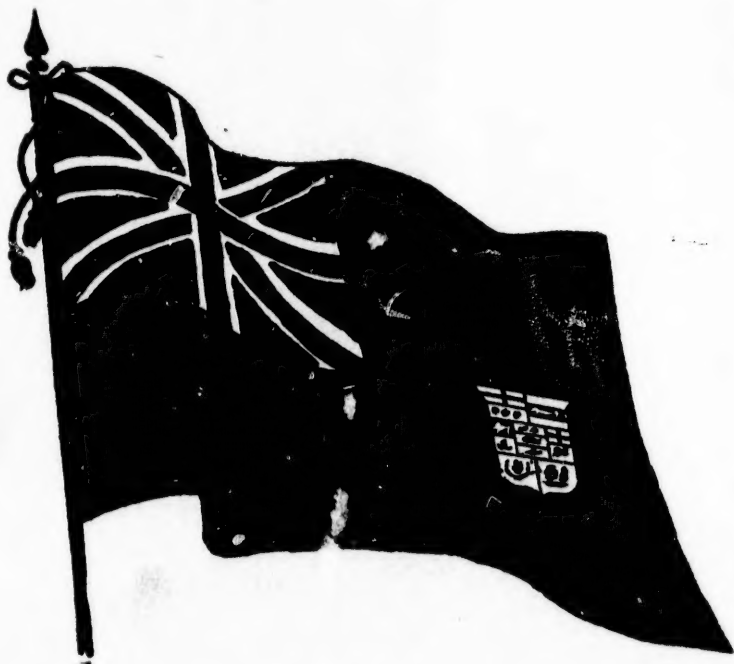


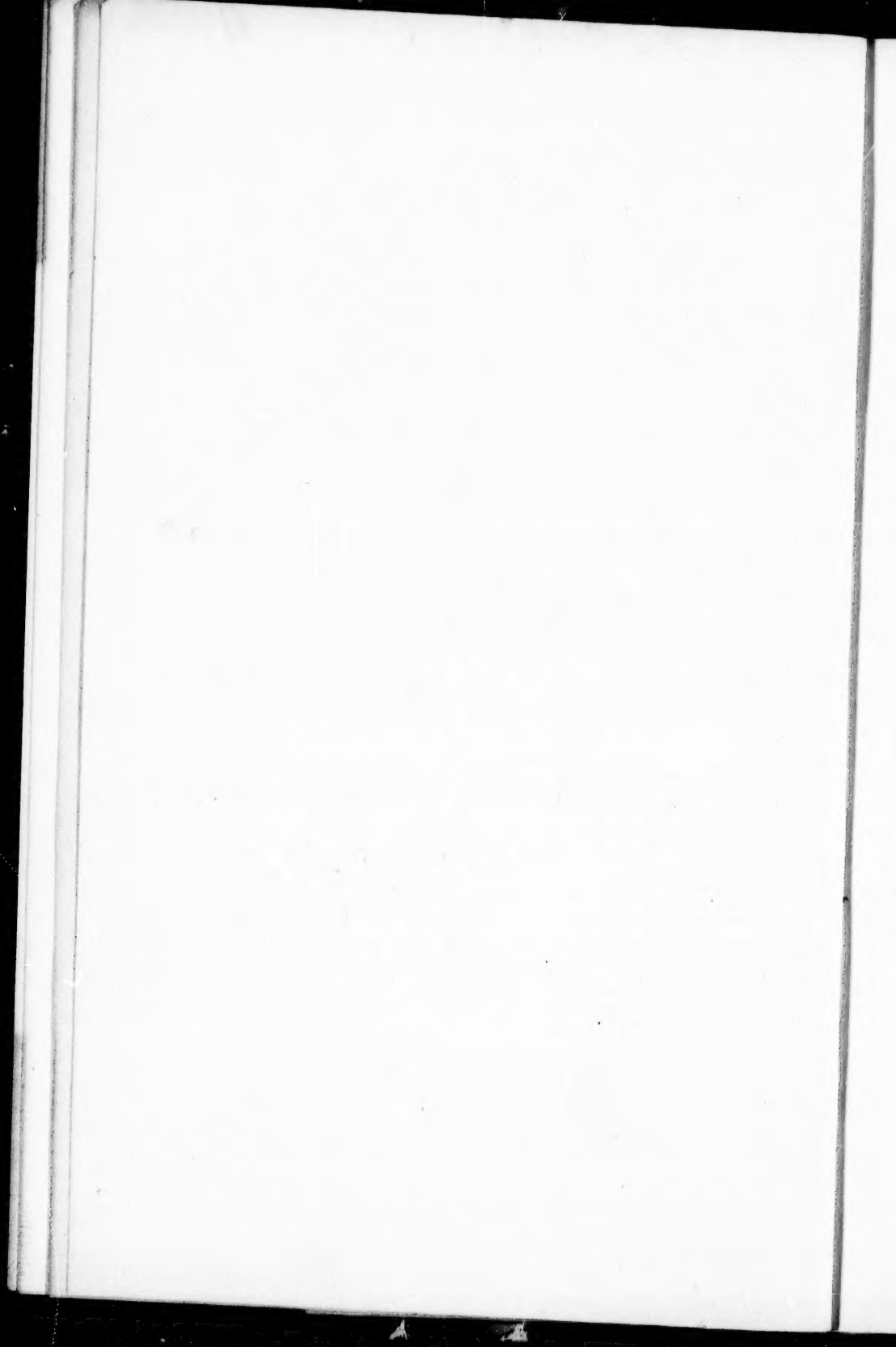
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War Sketches



Hedley
V.
Mackinnon

WAR SKETCHES



WAR SKETCHES

REMINISCENCES OF THE
BOER WAR
IN
SOUTH AFRICA
1899-1900

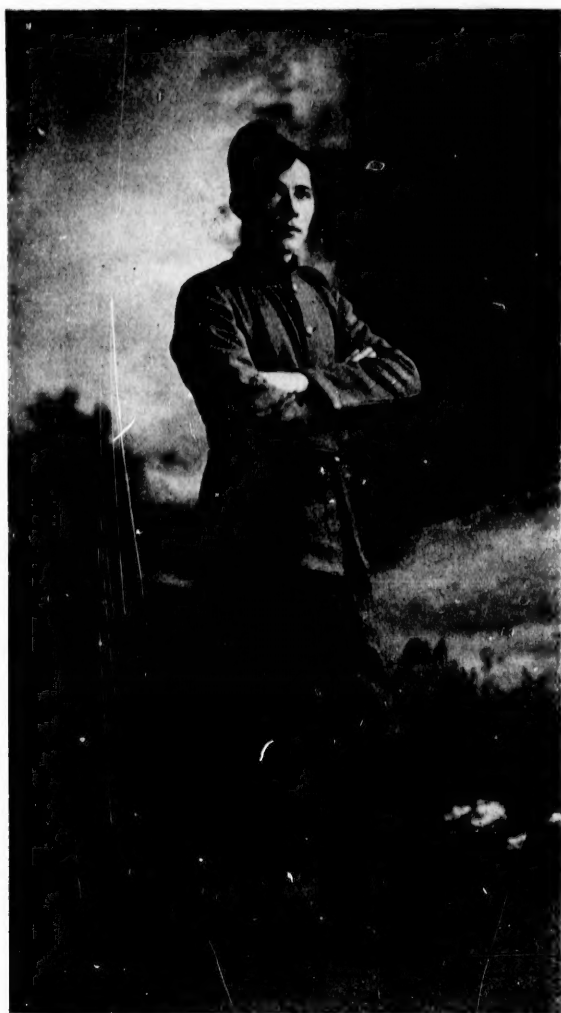
BY
HEDLEY V. MACKINNON
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H. V. MACKINNON

INTRODUCTION.

MANY books have already been written on the Boer war in South Africa and many more will be sure to follow ; but, to Canadians, no description of the war will appeal more strongly than such reminiscent sketches as are contained in this booklet.

These pen pictures give the best possible idea of the impressions made on the minds of the men in the ranks, and faithfully portray the life of the soldier, with its lights and shadows, during a campaign in many respects unparalleled in the history of our Great Empire.

The writer of the sketches has carefully kept within the range of his own experience ; and what a thrilling experience it was through which he, in common with his comrades, passed, during the year of service. They fought ; they endured the fatigue of long dreary marches over barren veldt—across huge kopjes—through mud pans and rivers ; they felt the pangs of hunger and the indescribable horrors of thirst in a waterless land. They did it all so bravely, so unflinchingly, that their Brigadier in wishing them bon voyage in a telegram to Col. Otter added : “Tell the men I feel that any credit I may have

INTRODUCTION

gained in this war I shall owe largely to the splendid way the Royal Canadians served me."

I bespeak for this booklet a wide reading, and I feel sure, from my perusal of the sketches, in which scenes familiar to myself are described, that the reader will come away understanding something of the life of "Tommy Atkins" actually engaged in a great campaign. The pen pictures are alike instructive and entertaining.

T. F. FULLERTON.

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ON TREK.

"Walk! you beggars! walk!"

DURING the last twelve months the boys who went from this Island to serve in South Africa have passed through—as the old saying is—many and varied experiences. Commencing at Belmont, where they learned what outpost duty means, and ending at Pretoria, when their work was crowned by success, there was crowded into this short space of time, days of suffering and hardship such that those who have not experienced it could scarcely believe possible. We have gone into action, on the now famous field of Paardeberg, singing, whistling, and even doing the cake-walk, not through bravery, but rather through sheer ignorance of danger. It was no uncommon thing to see a man get up and walk two or three hundred yards under fire to light a pipe or cigarette, or to gather the water bottles from his chums and go down to the river to fill them.

We have gone out at night to bring in the dead and wounded, and in many cases have made poor fellows more comfortable in their last moments. Often messages for home and mother were spoken from lips fast becoming silent. Closing eyes looked lovingly on photographs of a mother, sister or sweetheart, and hands long used to holding a rifle were clasped in prayer.

We have forded rivers where men and horses were carried away by the rushing swirl of waters, some to find safety further down, others to meet their death, if not nobly on the field, at least in the honest endeavor to perform their duty.

We have lived on one and a quarter biscuit per day—lived, but in a state of such weakness that I have seen two formerly strong men resting every few yards when carrying a forty pound box of biscuit.

Our clothing hung in rags. The legs were cut off our trousers to make patches for other parts. Buttons were gone, and in many cases men were without coats at all.

Night after night we slept in six inches of mud, in the pouring rain, with absolutely no protection. A thunder storm was always welcomed, for the flashes of lightning seemed to vary the monotony of the inky darkness, and the light was cheerful. Nor was this only for a night or two, but for weeks at a time. We never could get our clothing or blankets dry between the rain storms, and the condition of the ground made us feel so sick of life that an oft-heard expression was, "Cheer up, boys, you'll soon be dead!"

Of course at times we had our little fun. It was interesting to walk among the Highland regiments and hear stories of former campaigns. When the rain was not too bad, and there was any wood to be had, we used to gather round the cook fires and sing songs of a more or less cheerful character. But the pleasure was so little and the suffering so great, that nothing seemed to break the monotony of misery. It was

rather annoying to clean our rifles and find them half an hour afterwards knocked out of action by mud and water. Annoying, too, when our one solitary biscuit accidentally fell into the mud and had to be scraped clean, thereby decreasing its size.

But all these things could not compare with the horrors of that awful march from Jacobsdal to Bloemfontein. The scenes of suffering witnessed on that seemingly endless tramp are so imprinted on the minds of everyone who took part in it that they will stand out clearly when all else is forgotten.

The greatest hardship of all was, of course, scarcity of water. I have seen men stumbling along with heaving breasts and blood-shot eyes, over rock, sand and sage brush, mile after mile, begging, praying, yes, even cursing for water. Poor fellows with lips cracked and bleeding, would hold the water bottles to their lips vainly endeavoring to find a last drop in them. Some wiped with their hands the perspiration from their foreheads and then rubbed the moisture on their parched lips. Others, pale and weak from hunger and thirst—would rush to a dirty pool on the road, and, pushing aside the green slime and filth, suck up a few drops of liquid poison. When any kind of water was to be had we were joyful, and even though a rag had to be put over the mouth of the water bottle to keep back the hundreds of little animals we thanked God. In our worst times a mud puddle was always welcome, for a few handfuls put in a handkerchief and squeezed would furnish sufficient water to moisten the lips and throats of three or four

men. No talking was done on that march, for we needed all our spare wind, and besides, breathing was painful enough without making our throats more parched by unnecessary conversation. Blistered feet were plentiful; veldt sores, those terrible ulcers, were common, and the way those boys from comfortable Canadian homes struggled along when every step must have been a hell is deserving of the greatest praise.

In times such as those our officers would often pass down the lines, usually with a word or two to cheer us up and help the weaker ones along. Only four more miles, boys," "Try to hang on," "It won't be over two hours till we halt," etc. And the tired soldier would grasp his rifle more firmly, the poor fellow with soleless boots move with a quicker step, and the man almost crazy for water would straighten up, each with the look in his eyes that showed he would "stick it out" for that day's march at least.

And when the long-looked for pond came in sight, with what joy we hastened to the halting-place, piled arms, threw off our equipment, and hurried down to drink cup after cup of water,—sometimes slimy, it is true, sometimes dipping it up from between the horses and mules that needed it as badly as we did, but still water. Then on returning to the lines we heard orders read: "Reveille at 2 a. m., blankets in waggons at 2.30, breakfast at 3, march off at 3.30 a. m." The orderly men brought supper from the cook house, blankets were spread, darkness began to settle, and we lay down to sleep,—our day's work done.

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THE FAMOUS CHRISTMAS DINNER.

"Some men live to eat, others eat to live, but we did
neither."

WE were at Belmont, a half homesick and wholly discontented crowd, anxious to do something more than garrison duty and longing for a move. Our idea—perhaps a somewhat mistaken one—was that we had come out to Africa to fight and not to spend our year in seemingly useless outpost duty on the line of communication. This anxiety of ours to get into a fight was a great source of amusement to the Imperial troops, but although they smiled at our wild talk they always gave the same piece of advice, "Don't hurt yourselves in looking for a scrap, for after you have been in one you won't like it so well." We discovered the truth of this statement later on.

However, Christmas was drawing near and gradually from war our conversation flowed into the channel of what we were missing by not being at home. We knew of course that presents had been sent to us, but as many other things had gone astray we did not anticipate very much from that source. Our hopes were based chiefly on what the Army Service Corps would issue and our Colonel buy. In fact our Captain had told us that there was to be a plum

pudding for each man, lots of chicken, etc., and more fruit than we could eat. The puddings we knew were canned goods, probably partially dried, and would need steaming to bring them to proper condition.

In anticipation of this many of the boys made from old biscuit boxes a curious style of steamer. They bent the tin in a circle, nailed the edges together, put a bottom on in the same way, and punched holes through it with their bayonets. One tent, we knew, had no less than eleven of these utensils for sixteen men. It was truly a case of labor lost, for all the puddings they received might be served in an ordinary flower pot.

The wished-for fruit arrived in due course but to those of us who were at the Quartermaster's stores at the time it did not smell very fresh, to say the least, and when we shoved our fingers through the cases there was a sort of soft, mushy feeling that was not altogether satisfactory. But the fruit would be good, for had we not been told so, and there was plenty of it—but it did not arrive while we were there.

Christmas Day came and each man woke in the morning with such a hungry look in his eyes that he was at once handed a piece of biscuit. We did not hang up our stockings the night before but one man had pinned a pair of trousers on the outside of the tent to dry, and found them minus the buttons—an ostrich had been on the warpath.

For breakfast we had the usual bread and coffee, although we did not call them by those names. Bread

is known as 'rooti,' tea or coffee as 'hot stuff,' any thick kind of food like porridge or boiled mealies is called 'burgoo,' a thinner mixture such as soup goes by the name of 'skilly,' potatoes, of course, are 'Murphys,' preserved beef 'bully,' and the making and eating of any food is 'having a drum-up.' But this is by the way.

For breakfast, then, we had rooti and hot stuff—not exactly what we might be eating at home where the breakfast hour is usually spent in cracking nuts for the children,—but we were quite satisfied with what there was, for had we not been told that there would be lots of everything nice for dinner.

At nine o'clock the ration bugle sounded and our orderly men went to the Q. M. stores to draw the luxuries. We even sent a few extra men to help with the loads and the rest of us lay in the tents anxiously awaiting their return. In due time they appeared, but with a sad report. Nothing had been issued but the regular quantity of bread, beef and vegetables. Strange to say, this did not trouble us in the least for we had been told that the dinner on that day was to be a grand one. Ah! Here was the explanation. A sergeant pushed aside the tent door and jerked out, his head moving from side to side as if keeping time to his words: "The Colonel 'as hordered that hall the men 'ave dinner hat the usual hour. Hextras will be hissed hat three ho'clock." His head wagged some more and finally disappeared. Of course the 'hextras

would be hissed' for we had been told so, and knew we would not be deceived.

Dinner was cooked at twelve o'clock but the cooks must have been greatly worried, or busy preparing for the sumptuous repast that was to follow, for the stuff they sent into us was not fit for dogs. We left it in the pot untouched, as no one cared about par-boiled beef when in a few hours chickens and plum puddings would be common. The dinner was thrown out, the pot nicely cleaned with sand and water, and taken back to the cook-house, bright enough to receive any chickens that ever laid eggs.

About two o'clock a call was heard "No. 1 Section turn out for your puddings," and everyone rushed to the door. In an instant twenty-six men were gathered round the spot where, on a blanket lay packed in pretty tins, our puddings. It was a time we had long wished for and now right in front of us was the reality. But as we gazed on the big heap before us something seemed astray. We could not count the whole twenty-six. Then the corporal spoke. "You see boys, there is a pudding for each man but we are a few short—twenty-three short in fact—so number two tent with fourteen men will take two tins and out of them will give one-third of a pudding to number one. This makes an average of about eight men to each pudding, and the Colonel hopes you will enjoy them."

Were we worried? not a bit for we had been told that there was lots of pudding and such being the case any more would not be good for us. We did not use

the steamer previously made, but divided the "plenty" into twelve parts and received our shares on spoons. Then might have been seen an exhibition of true courage, for every man opened his mouth and actually swallowed plenty plum pudding, in fact all he could eat, at one mouthful. No one thought of indigestion; the change to such a rich diet never bothered any person, but strange to say, after having all the plum pudding we could eat we did not experience that full feeling. One fellow in an ashamed sort of way murmured that he would not object to some more, but he was a glutton and did not know when to stop eating.

"Who is orderly man here?" The corporal was speaking. "Gone out." "Well anyone will do. I want a man from each tent to draw chickens." General chorus: "I'll go." "You come Silver." "Wait till I wash my hands." "You are a chump. I don't want you to draw the chickens in that way but just to draw them from stores." Silver went—but never returned.

Three o'clock came, four, half-past four, and no chickens. Suddenly a faint voice was heard: "You fellows! Will you give your rations of chicken to the man in hospital who has fever? The other companies are doing so and we expect to have plenty to give him a feed. You know a fever patient does not eat much. We looked at the big pile of chicken—two wings and a thread of meat—enough for twelve men, and considered. Here we were with a splendid dinner before us and actually asked to give it away when we had

eaten nothing all day. Ah! Hadn't we? We were nearly forgetting the pudding. But we looked again at the two wings etc., and thought that all that, to be eaten by only twelve men, might hurt us, so the verdict was in favor of the fever patient. When it had gone, the glutton who wanted more pudding annoyed us still more by saying that he might have had a good square meal for his pet tarantula if we had not been so quick in giving the grub away.

They told us that the sick man had a splendid feed—we doubt it.

At five o'clock we were ordered to fall in and when the regiment formed up on parade the six barrels of beer were opened—all but five of them which were kept for future use. The company orderlies brought pots and each mess received its share. Then our senior major made a short speech in which he thanked the regiment for its good conduct up to the present time and said that in return for our excellent behaviour we were to receive a plentiful supply of fruit to make the day seem more like Christmas. In addition to this, if none of the men got drunk on the most generous share of English beer already issued we would be given an extra ration of rum—two brimming spoonfuls.

Regiment was dismissed and we returned to our tents with the intention of doing our best to keep sober after drinking a whole pint of beer. On reaching our tents what should we find but the non-coms. dividing the issue of fruit into equal shares. We stared in wonder at the big basketful before us and almost

wished it had been kept in stores for a few days, for how could we manage to do it justice after all the plum pudding and other luxuries which had gone before? However here it was, three black bananas, one orange, four plums, eleven grapes, and two mangroves;—and we had to eat it. Even the glutton had hard work to swallow the last of his two grapes and such being the case it is easy to imagine how the rest of us felt.

We dreaded cramps and lay down in the tents to rest our overloaded stomachs. It had been a splendid dinner, we were told so at least, but the beer must have made a good many of the men drunk, for the rum was never issued.



PAARDEBERG.

"The Canadians hastened the inevitable."

MUCH has been said and written of this our first engagement, but as it comes home to the people of Canada more than any other fight in which our regiment took part, it may be classed as one of those events which are always new. At other times in the campaign we have endured for a short time much greater hardships, but never were there four weeks of misery such as those from February 17th to March 15th, 1900. We had left Graspan on the morning of Tuesday, Feb'y. 13th, and reached Klip Drift early the following Saturday. Fully expected to have a day's rest there, but about sundown orders came to pack up and be ready to move at a moment's notice. We started at seven in the evening and marched until ten, when a halt of an hour or so was called that the mules and oxen might be watered at the river. During this hour we slept. Then it began again and we went along, mile after mile, hour after hour, not knowing where we were going or what was ahead of us. One misery we were spared on that march—the heat—but the night was fairly warm and we were in a very sandy part of the country, so that the dust bothered us almost as much as the sun would have done. We were short of water, for the supply at Klip Drift was

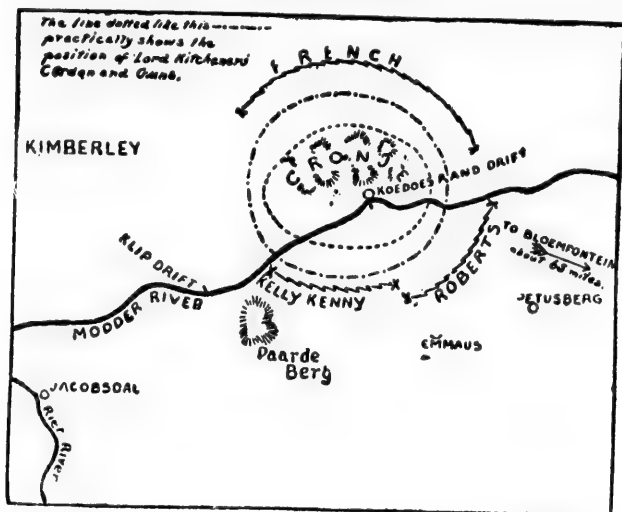
limited and many of the boys had found it impossible to fill their bottles ; but our captain—a man in every sense of the word—did everything in his power to make it easier for us. He, in some way, managed to obtain about half a bucket of water and served it out with his own hands—one cupful for ten men—and the last person in the company to wet his lips was the captain himself. We were hungry too, but hunger is forgotten in the longing for water.

Towards morning guns were heard in advance and we quickened our pace, not knowing what was going on but wishing to get there before the finish. As light began to break over the hills and we could see the road, numbers of scraps of melon and citron rind were found scattered along our line of march where they had been thrown by the Kaffirs accompanying our advance guard. These were eagerly picked up, scraped, and eaten by our men, as they were both juicy and cool. The last few hours were terrible, but everything must have an end and shortly before six o'clock we halted in a grove near the bank of the Modder. Rations were at once issued—one and a quarter biscuit per man, tea was made—the ration of tea at that time being one twenty-fourth of an ounce and sugar one quarter ounce—and we tried to eat a morsel before going into action. It was useless, for before the tea was cool enough to sip we were given the usual ration of rum—one half gill—and ordered to fall in.

We went first at the double to the slope of a rising ground on the top of which our guns were in position,

but after staying there a short time were ordered back and proceeded to cross the river.

At the point of crossing—Troop's Drift—the current was very swift and the water varied in depth from two to six feet. From our place on the bank we saw the Gordons wading across, three or four of them



joining arms and thus supporting each other, but when our fellows started they carried ropes over and by a number pulling on each end we were enabled to cross in single file more easily than the others had done. Our haversacks, containing the fragment of biscuit supposed to represent a day's food, were tied around our necks, rifles slung as high as possible, and watches or other articles liable to be damaged by water were placed in the helmets. In this way we forded the

Modder, and although many of our men were thrown off their feet by the rushing river none were lost. On reaching the farther bank we had a good wash and filled our water bottles, after drinking as much as we could hold, and then formed up to begin our first fight. As one of the boys remarked, "We were up against the real thing then."

The general plan of attack is so well known that a description of it would only be a repetition of what everyone already understands. Enough to say that we were extended to ten paces and advanced. Our company was held in reserve during the greater part of the fight, but on this day, on account of the ground sloping towards the Boer position the casualty list among the reserves was larger than is usually the case.

We had, of course, got wringing wet when crossing the river, but the sun came out about nine o'clock and in a few hours our clothing was almost dry. Then a most unusual thing happened. Our men, lying under fire, but not actually engaged, one by one fell asleep and enjoyed the best rest they had had for some days. While sleeping, a heavy thunder storm came on and in a few moments we were as wet as ever. As it was now late in the afternoon there was not enough sun to dry our clothes and consequently the same old, miserable feeling tackled us again.

It was about this time that Father O'Leary walked along the lines, stopping to speak to each man, especially the French Canadians, and doing his best to cheer them up. A plucky action on his part, but very foolish

for he was making a target of himself and drawing fire on each man he spoke to. During all this time the usual quiet excitement of a fight was keeping up our interest. Every now and then a cry would come for stretcher-bearers, and by and by some poor fellow was carried past moaning, often with blood trickling down from his wounds. One of our own boys, who has not come home, walked along the line, under fire, gathered the water bottles from his chums, went to the river and filled them, and then came back and deliberately carried each one to its owner. And in our regiment dozens of brave deeds were performed, any one of which was worthy of the Victoria Cross had the proper report been sent in. It is a very strange thing that in the Royal Canadian Regiment, which did its part so well and received such praise, not one man ever received the V. C. This was not because no one had earned it, but rather that the deeds of valor performed in our numerous engagements were never reported, and no effort was made to reward any of the boys for their heroism. About four or five o'clock on Sunday afternoon as we were beginning to tire of the thing, the Cornwalls were seen coming up from the rear, and we found that they were to do a bayonet charge. Before making the final rush they lay down with us for a few minutes' rest, and it was then that the mistake occurred which gave us such a name for bravery, but which was paid for with the blood of many of our brave fellows.

When the Cornwalls halted, preparatory to charging,

G and H Companies of their corps were right beside G and H of the Canadians, and when, in a minute or two the order was passed along for G and H Companies to fix bayonets, we naturally understood it to refer to ourselves and acted accordingly. Almost instantly the bugles sounded the charge and we started. When our other companies saw G and H rushing along, they fixed bayonets and did the same, so that the work which was intended to be done by the Cornwalls became a combined rush by both battalions. The charge failed. No men who ever lived could have made a success of it, but the grandeur of that wild rush must have given the Boers a much higher opinion of British courage.

The Colonel of the Cornwalls, who ordered the charge, and who held in his hand five pounds for the first man to reach the Boer trenches, fell at the first volley, when leading his men, and was buried by them next day.

This piece of work practically ended the day's fighting but firing was continued until long after sundown, when all our men who could be found, gathered together to march back to where we were encamped for the night. When we had walked about a mile our junior major appeared, and, after giving us orders for the night, asked for a volunteer search party to go out for dead and wounded. In the whole campaign there is nothing more creditable to Prince Edward Island than the fact that all the men who formed that party were from her shores. And it is

the more worthy of praise, as all our own wounded had previously been brought in.

The scenes witnessed on that field where so many heroes lay dying, are beyond description. It was sad in the extreme, but amid the sadness was a feeling of pride—that we were permitted to form part of an army which held such men in its ranks. One poor chap shot through the throat told us that he was not badly hurt but dreaded lying on the field all night. His wound, he said, was not painful, but interfered with his breathing. We gave him more clothing and promised to send a stretcher out for him. "No," was his answer, "Don't say that. So many have promised a stretcher and I have waited hours for it. Let it come as a surprise." We found him in the morning—dead.

For the remainder of that night we slept, in spite of the cold and hunger. It had been found impossible to bring our wagons over the river and food and blankets were not ready for us. On an average five men tried to find shelter under one rubber sheet.

Next day, Monday, we rested after burying the dead, and in the evening marched out to a rising ground a few miles from the bivouac, where our Brigadier made a short address of congratulation and thanked the battalion for its conduct on the previous day.

Tuesday morning we moved out to take our place in the cordon formed around the enemy. All day we lay on the field doing some fine shooting with almost no

danger to ourselves, and at sundown retired to the hills where we were to do outpost duty. Here we remained until about noon on Friday, starving, shivering with the cold, and wringing wet all the time from the continuous rain. While on these hills some of our men managed to capture a nice heifer which was killed and eaten in double time, the meat being put on to fry almost before it was cold.

On Friday our company moved back near Troops Drift to a hill we afterwards named Starvation Kopje, and on it passed three more days of misery. Rain every night, no firewood, wet clothing and blankets, outpost duty and a two mile walk for water.

From this position we had a splendid view of the surrounding country and could see all that was going on in the plain below us. Here we first saw a large army, almost fifty thousand men, and could watch all their movements. The boys would sit for hours enjoying the spectacle and observing the effect of the shrapnel and lyddite which poured unceasingly into the Boer trenches. But even this little excitement grew monotonous and on the third day our only topic of conversation was about when we were likely to go home. Poor boys! None of them dreamed how soon some were going home.

On Monday afternoon we came down from the hill and marched up the river to the British trenches whither the rest of our battalion had preceeded us. In passing over the position first held by Cronje we actually had to break ranks to avoid the carcasses of

mules, horses and bullocks with which the ground was almost covered. The stench was sickening ; so bad indeed that in our regiment the name Paardeberg was seldom heard. We used a more vulgar but certainly a more expressive word and called the place Stinkfontein. In the evening tea was made and served on the bank of the river and when the night grew sufficiently dark we moved in silence to the trenches and took up our position in readiness for the advance. Our orders were that we were to move out at 2 a. m. in two ranks, the front rank with fixed bayonets, fifteen paces in advance of the others, who were to sling their rifles and carry picks and shovels to assist the Royal Engineers in digging the new trench. Front rank of course to act as a guard in case of an attack. The new trench to be two hundred yards nearer the Boer position than we then were. We lay down in the trenches to get a few hours sleep and at two o'clock were awakened and got ready for the advance. Orders were passed along in a whisper and we started. We knew that the Boers were about six hundred yards away but never imagined that we were to get any nearer to them than the distance ordered. So when the word to halt was passed along we lay down, thinking the worst was over and that we only had to keep quiet until the new trench was made. But in a very few moments, to the surprise of everyone, word came to advance again. On and on we moved, scarcely daring to think what the result might be but hoping that our leaders knew what they were doing. For the last minute or two the

nervous strain was intense. We knew how far our trench was from the Boers, and could judge fairly well the distance we had come, so expected every second to be right on top of the enemy. This might have happened, but one of our fellows kicked a tin can, probably there for that very purpose, and then came a single shot from the Boer sentry, followed by a volley that almost took our breath away. The flashes from the rifles made a continuous blaze of light right in front and we could almost imagine we felt the heat from them. Men dropped on all sides and in a few seconds the air was filled with cries and groans from the wounded. Those who were hit in that first volley and did not manage to get back almost at once were afterwards killed, for, being disabled, they could not throw up any protection for themselves. The rest of us, using our bayonets as picks, and canteen covers or hands for shovels, quickly dug small holes and piled the clay in front as a covering for our heads. The hardest part of the whole thing was to lie there being shot at without returning the enemy's fire. The Boers knew we were somewhere in front of them but could not tell exactly where and were firing at random. Consequently had any one of our men discharged his rifle the flash from it would have betrayed our position and the probable result would have been that not a single man of F or G companies would have come out alive.

Then the thought struck us that we were in a delicate position should morning break and show us to the enemy. But before this happened the fire gradually

slackened and we crawled back one at a time to the trench which had been built. However, another uncomfortable feeling arose from this cause—that here were F, G and H Companies of the Canadians forty yards from five thousand Dutchmen and nearly six hundred yards from any of our own men. Our only plan therefore was to scare the life out of the enemy and keep down their fire. This was done to perfection, for all the men gathered in the trenches with rifles cocked and ready for anything that might turn up. We thought the Boers would be anxious to see what had occurred in the night, and just as day was breaking our suppositions were shown to be correct. One man, more eager than his fellows, slowly raised his head over the trench. We just had time to observe the look of surprise on his face and then there was not much face left to look at, for nearly all our fellows fired together, and over a hundred rifles aimed at one small target less than fifty yards away made that Boer look surprised. In fact he lost his head entirely.

From that time until the sun was up they were continually jumping around their trenches waving white flags, but everyone who showed himself was shot. About seven o'clock the matter seemed settled, for a veldt-cornet of theirs came galloping over the field with a large white flag on a staff. The Boers laid down their arms and came trooping out of the trenches; the ten days' fight at Paardeberg Drift was over; the Canadians had hastened the inevitable; Majuba was avenged, for Cronje had surrendered.

OUR DOCTOR.

"Bless thee, Bully Doctor."

HE was a Frenchman, with all the peculiar characteristics of his race ; short and slight, but well put together ; a thorough athlete and quick as a steel trap. When he joined us first, his knowledge of the English language was somewhat hazy, but gradually improved as time passed. On the steamer from Quebec to Capetown we began to discover that in the little doctor we had a bit of a curiosity, but not until we reached Belmont did we find out just what he was.

The task of drilling the stretcher bearers fell to him as junior surgeon, and the way he handled them was something marvellous. In the forenoon we always managed to gather around, at a respectable distance of course, and watch the fun. No sign of a smile ever appeared on the faces of the onlookers, but when the show was over and the "little doctor" gone, we gave our feelings full play, and laughed until we were sore. As a rule the men undergoing the operation fell in before him properly. Then he would number them, and proceed to give a few orders,—“Stretcher bears, move to the right in file ! Form fours ! Left ! Go on ! Move ! Quick march ! Right form ! Stop ! Halt !! Whoa !!! Oh, Damn de English ! ! ! !”

His usual method of treating anyone who reported sick was—looking at the sick report—"Jenkins, Wenkins, Benkins. Oh, I don't know, but come on anyhow, whatever your name is. Well, my boy, what is the matter?" "Cramps, Eh? What! You will have cramps? Well I will give you three pills, you understand; you take one pill now, one pill at dinner time, one pill to-night, and the other in the morning. You understand? And if you not well next week come back again, eh?"

He was always quick in his movements, and expected everyone else to be the same. Woe betide the man who was slow in answering to his name when called from the sick report. Nothing was too bad for him. "My boy, you think I am sit here all day to wait for you? Why you not come when I call, eh? You ever come to me this way again, I will give you some things that make you move more quick, eh? You understand? Now, what is the matter?"

In the medicine panniers the pills always went by numbers instead of names, and his favorite seemed to be number nine. No matter whether the man for treatment was suffering from a touch of sunstroke or a blistered foot, it was all the same. On one occasion, when the victim was, by his own account, feeling pretty feverish, the doctor called for number nine. The orderly replied that there were no number nines in stock. Quick as a flash came the request, "Well then, give me a six and a three." Talk about Yankees being equal to any emergency; with our doctor necessity was

certainly the mother of invention, and he always rose to the occasion.

While he was on duty at Klip River, the Sgt. Major of the Royal Irish Rifles reported sick with a veldt sore on his hand. Looking him over carefully, the doctor broke out : " My boy, you are Sergeant Major you have one sore hand, eh ? Well, my boy, you eat too much. I will give you two pills, eh ; you will take one pill every two hours, you understand ; the last one not so soon." But when a man was really sick no one could be more attentive than he. We all liked him, although his manner was, to say the least, very peculiar. In cases where his knowledge of surgery was required, he always did his best and treated the different wounds or sores with all the tenderness of a woman. One of our boys received a nasty cut, and the doctor was as attentive as though the wounded man were his own brother. He came into our car on the armoured train one evening with a pillow in his hand, and going over to the sick man asked : " Well, my boy, how your head is this evening ?" " Pretty sore, doctor." " Is it one jump, jump pain ?" " No." " A pain that stands still all the time ?" " Yes." " And sore, sore like blazes ?" " Yes, doctor." " Well, my boy, I will give you one pillow for put under your head, eh ? You will put the pillow down and your head on the pillow, you understand, eh ? And these two little pills you will take, now one of them if your head is sore, and the other one I will wrap in a piece of paper, eh, and it you will take in the night if your head is sore again,

you understand?" The piece of paper in which the pill was wrapped was fully as large as a postage stamp.

He was certainly peculiar, a thorough Frenchman, but with a very soft heart, and, among the few pleasing recollections of a hard campaign, one figure will be remembered when most others are forgotten—that of our little French Doctor.



INDIGESTION PILLS.

"Now good digestion wait on appetite, and
health on both."

THEY were first heard of at Belmont, when some of the boys received letters saying that the people at home were sending out a number of boxes containing puddings, cake of all kinds, chocolates, cigarettes, and in fact lots of everything generally supposed to make Christmas what it ought to be. After that, in almost every letter we received there would be the expression: "I hope the Christmas boxes reached you all right," and we invariably answered that they had not exactly arrived but that we had heard they were on the way. Then one day we were told that the cases were in Cape Town, and our officer had wired to have them forwarded at once to Belmont. Naturally that good news raised our hopes, and, as the day on which they should arrive drew near, a few of the boys always happened to be at the station. But they did not come, and we began to imagine all sorts of things. Perhaps they had gone the wrong road. An accident might have happened to the train. Perchance some hospital men had commandeered them for the sick. Anything might have occurred, and we grew pale and haggard-looking from the terrible strain

on our nerves. But after a time the edge was worn off our suffering and we were able to think of the matter with a calmer mind. In fact the non-arrival of the goods formed a common topic of conversation and we were never tired of guessing what would be sent to each fellow. It got to be a standing joke in the company for someone to remark, whenever a train was heard, "there come our Christmas boxes, boys," but Christmas came and went and we enjoyed the presents in imagination only. We lay on our backs in the tents thoroughly appreciating the plentiful supply of imaginary chocolates, raisins, and almond nuts with which we ended our spiritual banquet. It was a time when the philosophy of Christian Science would have been very comforting, but none of us were well read in that subject and thus were not able to properly enjoy the imaginary viands. A cigar with even a faintly perceptible flavor, and any smoke at all, would have been relished more than the ones we had, and even army biscuit satisfied our appetites in a far greater degree than the visionary plum puddings and cake could ever have done. It was a Barmecides feast all right, but only as regards the first part. The second half was still to come and sometimes we regretted that unlike Schacabac we had no one to strike for causing the delay in furnishing it.

Time passed, and gradually we grew to think less of our Christmas boxes until one day, after Paardeberg, word was received that they had been sent to Kimberley, and might come across to us by transport. At

that stage of the game we were in a state of semi-starvation and had the presents reached us then they would have been appreciated as perhaps nothing was ever appreciated before. But they did not come and after a day or two we became quite resigned to our fate, never expecting to see the cakes or puddings until we started for home.

A short time after this we marched into Bloemfontein and very soon got better food and far more of it than we had received since leaving Gras Pan.

While quartered at Bloemfontein our regiment went out several times on reconnaissance and when the disaster at Sannah's Post occurred we were hurried out to reinforce or try to mend matters. It was a fast march and fairly long. We were not in good condition for there had been rain nearly every night since we reached the town and our tents had not arrived. A few days later we marched back to the city and there are few in G Company who will forget the surprise that awaited us. Our tents were all pitched and ready for us to occupy, and the Christmas boxes had arrived.

Scarcely had we piled arms and taken off our equipment when the order was heard G Company fall in for your Christmas presents." And we fell in so quickly that our non-coms. almost wished that there were presents to be issued at every parade. We fairly ran to the Quartermasters' stores and there lay three large boxes—THE boxes—containing the good things that we had been thinking about for months.

For the New Brunswick boys there was a large case

with a small box in it for each man. From Charlotte-town three boxes had been sent—one large one from the ladies of the city with a present for each of us, the other two containing private gifts. By chance, one plum pudding,* which should have been in the large box was packed in one of the others, and it is the only thing we ever received from the people at home. The principal box for the Island boys had gone to G. Co. of the Buffs.

But although the puddings, etc. had failed to materialize we still had our private presents to fall back upon, and they were well worth receiving. Several of the boys got large fruit cakes, tins of milk, oysters, jam, salmon, etc. It was amusing to hear the remarks as each name was called, and the man stepped forward to receive his box: "Is that from her, Bobby?" "Now remember your failing, Shaky, and don't eat too much." "Come to dinner with me to-morrow, will you—and bring a few doughnuts along," etc., etc. When the cases were empty and there was no chance of receiving any more, we hurried back to our tents and began opening the different packages. "Oh! what nice red and blue ribbon—and I need a bootlace." "Say, boys, homemade candy in a tin box—just what I wanted to hold my towel and soap—have a piece." "Here, darling, try this—well I'll be blowed. If there ain't some of Jack Joy's oysters. Open them quick." "You fellows just keep your hair

*From Mrs. (Capt.) Bartlett.

on for a few minutes. First thing you know everything will be eaten and you will have nothing for tomorrow." "I say, old man, here is a package of Sweet Caporals for you—came in my box." "Give me a taste of that cake, Silver." "Boys, look here; a whole big fruit cake—but there's citron in it; what a pity." "What's this? A tin of condensed milk—Oak brand. That must be from the new factory at home. We'll try it in the tea this evening." "Pay attention, you fellows. Here is a box of cigars for the crowd, with the compliments of the barbers of Charlottetown. They will just go two apiece. Pass them round." "Someone go for the tea, it's ready." "Who's orderly man?" "Ah! here it comes. Dish it out please." Now, let us have a proper supper. Say grace, Silver." "All right. Shut up fellows. Oh Lord, thanks awfully. Eat!"

Then we started, and for the next half hour everyone was too busy to talk. Scotch cake, fruit cake, doughnuts, tarts, canned meats and fish, bon-bons and raisins vanished as if by magic, and it was not until one of the boys looked up, and uttered a long-drawn "A-h-h-h!" that we understood how much we had eaten. Had the people at home only seen us then they would not only have considered themselves well repaid for their trouble, but would have wished—as we did—that they had sent more.

Our company was the only one in the regiment which received anything like this, and we found great pleasure in inviting members of other companies to come and see what the little Provinces had sent to their

boys. Some of the others were well supplied with different articles of underclothing, had received plenty money from their own towns and been well treated in many ways, but when it came to a good big feed of the things they used to eat at home, the underclothes and money were all forgotten and the one thought in their minds was "why didn't our people send some grub instead of those blooming socks."

We enjoyed watching the hungry look in their eyes as they walked up and down our lines, vainly wishing for an invitation to come in and have a taste, and the enjoyment was increased by the knowledge that while we had ragged clothes they had good ones and would not give us any.

The presents as a whole lasted for two days, and after that, for about a week, we had at every meal a small piece of cake from some which had been held in reserve. Gradually, however, everything disappeared, and in a few days the only signs of the presents that remained were the boxes they had come in. But every now and then at supper one of the boys with that longing look in his eyes would remark: "I wish we had some more of that fruit cake."



OUR FRIENDS THE ENEMY.

"His army is a ragged multitude
Of hinds and peasants, rude and merciless."

THE Boer is a coward. No one who has ever been in action against him can reasonably think otherwise. In the morning when he goes out to fight his one prayer to Heaven is that he may be shown how he can most treacherously murder our men. With a bandolier, bible, and white flag, he takes his position among the rocks, leaving his horse at the foot of the hill furthest from the British. A Dutchman can hide himself and find almost absolute protection, where a British soldier would expose his whole body.

In person the Boer is—to use a common slang expression—not much to look at. The men, although tanned by exposure, are usually of a fair complexion, with mouse-colored hair and watery blue eyes. These eyes are a distinguishing characteristic of the people, for more than any other race, they have the sneaky, treacherous expression always seen on the face of a coward. In most cases he dresses in a suit of grey homespun, often just as useful as our khaki for rendering himself invisible in the sunburned grass of the veldt. A light slouch hat with a handkerchief wound round in the form of a pugaree covers his head, and

his legs are generally protected by leather leggings. Picture to yourself a filthy, ignorant-looking fellow in a costume like this, wearing over his shoulder the inevitable bandolier full of ammunition, in his hand a Mauser rifle and you will see the Boer as we saw him, a cowardly cur, belonging to a civilization of three hundred years ago, and a cancer on the face of the earth.

As a fighter the Dutchman most certainly is a success in his own way. He knows his country perfectly, is a good rider, does not object to filth, eats any old thing, and runs away when there is the least sign of danger. The rule in any kind of warfare is, "Injure the enemy as much as possible, with the least loss to yourself," and the Boer follows the maxim certainly, but before it always places another, older than the hills, to the effect that "he who fights and runs away may live to fight another day."

In practically all the engagements in which our regiment took part, the firing was at long range, seldom becoming less than three or four hundred yards. Whenever our firing line got to within any decent range, the main body of Boers fled down the far side of the hills, mounted their horses, and rode off as quickly as possible to the next suitable position, leaving a few men against us to keep up a pretence of firing and cover the retreat of the others. In several cases our fellows, working towards the position in the ordinary form of attack, rushed the kopjes with fixed bayonets, only to see on reaching the top the main

body of Boers a mile away and still going. Sometimes we managed to pick up a few who had been left behind, either intentionally or by their horses running away, but in most cases they entirely escaped us, and our only satisfaction was in hearing from the natives, who saw the enemy in retreat, that they were carrying away with them a certain number of killed and wounded. We have never had a decent chance at them with the bayonet, but have seen others catch them—for instance, the famous charge of the Gordons at Hout Nek. Here we heard the Highland cheer and smiled, knowing that although we were not lucky enough to be in it, the gallant Gordons were having their revenge for Magersfontein. To our straining ears came the shrieks and groans of wounded and dying Dutchmen, and we fairly hugged ourselves with delight, each man picturing to himself the worried look on the faces of the Boers as they saw the relentless steel draw nearer and nearer. Our greatest hope was to engage them at close quarters, but the opportunity never came, for every time we made a rush they were gone, but we knew that in many cases other regiments have got into them, and while we regret our own poor fortune in this respect, we rejoice that the work, which would have given us so much satisfaction, was done, and well done, by others.

In the battle of Poplar Grove, as an instance of how the Boers managed to get away, three or four men were left to handle a forty pound gun mounted on a large kopje, commanding our line of advance. The

firing from this gun delayed our column for four hours, during which time Kruger and Steyn who were present, were able to flee. In Roman history we read about Horatius and two companions holding the bridge against Lars Porsena and his army, but who can say that the few men who worked that gun on the big hill might not become just as famous were there a Macaulay to put in verse the story of their exploit ?

In this particular case our brigade could not march past that kopje when the shells were dropping all around, and for all we knew it might have been a trap ; but after a time another battalion of ours—the Shropshires I think,—worked round to the rear, climbed the hill, and captured the gun. But the damage had been done. The delay enabled the Boer army to get away, and for the remainder of the march into Bloemfontein we fought a continuous rear guard action.

And thus it has been all along: cowardly, tricky and treacherous, the Boer is not worthy of the British soldier's steel. A disgrace to Christianity and modern civilization, he has put up a good fight simply because he knows the country perfectly, has at his command any number of natural fortresses, and is a good hand at retreating. There is no doubt but that, as the Boers have for years been preparing for this war, enormous quantities both of food and ammunition are buried throughout the country, and are being drawn upon from time to time, as occasion requires. But it cannot last forever, and in a very short time we may hope to see our army, under the Generalship

of Lord Kitchener, thoroughly fitted and equipped for the species of guerilla warfare now in progress. The extreme mobility of the enemy is the cause of the apparent success of his movements, but with new horses and plenty of them, there is no reason why our cavalry could not equalize matters, and the Boer, the scum of the earth, the thorn in the side of England, be settled once and forever.



"SPASMS."

"For spangled night does not always spread its
shade for mortals."

ON New Years night G Company was detailed for outpost duty, No. 1 Section on North Railway Patrol. We left camp at Belmont Station and went up the line shortly after five o'clock. The evening was clear and cool, though not at all uncomfortable, and we anticipated a quiet night's duty. At that time of the year the ground became very hot during the day, and towards night sent up waves of heat through which the stars seemed to waver to and fro. The sergeant in charge of us—the same who shook his head so much on Christmas day—was of a very nervous disposition, and about eight o'clock, as a particularly bright star came up, we noticed his eyes fixed very intently upon it. "Boys," in a hoarse whisper, "the Boers are sending up fire balloons from Magersfontein. Look!"

"That's a star, sergeant."

"Star! Don't you think I can believe my own eyes?"

The man from the permanent corps broke in: "Perhaps one of the angels is smoking a cigarette or lighting a match on his hob-nailed boots."

"Here! You go back and report to the station guard that the enemy are sending up a fire balloon. Show them where it is."

The man went, and returned with orders for the sergeant to sit up and watch that the balloon did not burn any insulation off the wireless telegraph line.

* *

We were at Paardeberg when Ladysmith was relieved and were feeling pretty miserable. Supplies were short and the men were almost starving, but a day or two after the surrender the battalion was formed up on parade. Naturally we thought that our victory was to be celebrated in some agreeable manner. Perhaps they were going to give us an extra biscuit; perhaps only half of one; but every man felt sure that something pleasant would happen. When we formed up, the Adjutant read a despatch to the effect that "Dundonald—Buller's cavalry—with the Natal Carbineers and a composite regiment had entered Ladysmith." We were told not to cheer or make any demonstration—no one knew why—but the caution was entirely unnecessary. Who felt like cheering? What did we care about Ladysmith or Buller's cavalry when we were starving? Why didn't they give us something to eat? The battalion was dismissed and then the men gave vent to their pent up feelings. While the people at home were waving flags, firing salutes, cheering the British officers and shaking hands with each other, we cursed Ladysmith and the Boers.

anathemized the Army Service Corps for not furnishing more food, abused our officers, and went away to drink cup after cup of Modder River water with the energy of despair. And that is how the Royal Canadians celebrated the relief of Ladysmith.

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When the disaster at Sannah's Post occurred, our brigade was hurried out from Bloemfontein, but at Springfield, about eight miles from the city, quite a number of the men fell out. Among these were three who had been out in that direction before without having any fighting to do, and not expecting any on this trip thought it quite an unnecessary march. These three came back to Springfield camp where some Life Guards were doing some garrison duty, and in order that they might receive good treatment one of them pretended that he was suffering from a touch of sunstroke, and the other two that they were escorting him back to Bloemfontein. The Guards made a nice bed of straw in the loft of a barn, loaned the three Canadians some of their blankets and greatcoats and shared supper with them. The night was passed very comfortably, and in the morning the supposed sick man bluffed the doctor and was ordered into hospital at Bloemfontein. All were to be sent in on a Red Cross wagon which was leaving Springfield at nine o'clock. When the Canadians saw the Kaffirs inspanning the mules they went down to the spring for the purpose of filling their water bottles and forgot to come back. By

the side of the stream was a nice grove in which they lay hidden and from whence they could watch the Guards searching the house and barn for them. After a time the wagon started and when it was well out of sight the three made dinner. Rice had been bought the day before, each man had lots of biscuit, tea and sugar, and they had a fine meal. After dining, someone suggested a bath, and as such things were rare in those days it was thoroughly enjoyed. They dressed and rambled around among the trees for a few hours and towards evening strolled back to Bloemfontein. Reached camp about seven o'clock but could not find a place to sleep as all their blankets had gone out on the transport wagon with the battalion. However, the town was still open, so with a sovereign borrowed from one of the officers they went in. One of them had previously spent a night in the city, so led the way at once to a private house where ginger beer and cakes could be bought and a bed supplied if necessary. They afterwards told that between the three they ate two dozen cakes and drank nine bottles of beer. Candles and writing paper were furnished by the lady of the house and the three retired to a room in one of the adjoining buildings. Each man sat up two and a half hours to keep watch—the time being told by the length of candle consumed—and made the hours seem less long by writing letters. At five o'clock next morning they left the house and reached camp before reveille, perfectly satisfied with the knowledge that they had passed two days and nights in as pleasant

and comfortable a manner as any of the army had ever done.

* *

Towards the end of August, DeWet was hovering around the railway line in the vicinity of Klip River, and in consequence of this, we, on the armoured train, were kept continually on the move, patrolling the line from Vereeniging to Elandsfontein. The garrisons at the different stations were weak, and every night we were sent to some place to assist in case of an attack. But on Friday, Aug. 31st, General Chermiside found it necessary to make an inspection of the line from Elandsfontein Junction to Pretoria, and it was our duty to escort him. We left Pretoria on the return journey Friday afternoon and reached Elandsfontein about 7 p. m. Orders were that our engine was to be sent to Johannesburg for repairs, so we were sidetracked for the night and the engine detached.

As everyone expected, DeWet, knowing that we were well out of the way for that night at least, held up a train, and early next morning we were hurried down to the scene of action,—about four miles south of Klip River. Of course we were too late. The Boers had taken all the stuff they wanted, set fire to the train and hurried off to the hills on either side of the line. When we arrived the whole was a mass of flames but through the smoke we saw that several carloads of food were still almost uninjured. Immediately after our train stopped most of our men were sent away on observation duty to guard against an

attack, and the remainder put on fatigue work on the burning train. After hauling off the cars all the stuff they could get at, our men decided that some of it would be far safer if stowed away in our own cars and at once proceeded to dispose of it in this way. Hereupon a sentry was placed over the goods with orders that no unbroken cases were to be touched, but in the smoke it was almost impossible for the sentry to see what was being done, even had he wished to do so, and thus the accidental falling and consequent breaking of a case was never noticed.

In our car, which carried the rations, only one man had been left, and he was not of much account as a forager, but managed to gather in a little. About an hour after the fun began he came out to where we were on duty and made us almost wild by the stories he told of the great quantities of jam, mutton chops, etc., which were being acquired by the other cars. We abused him for not laying in a supply for us, and his answer was that he was only one man, and could not be expected to do much, but that he had carried down a few tins of jam—four or five hundred—and two or three cases of mutton chops. This made us feel a little better, and when in a few hours we were recalled, and each man brought down about a hundred tins more we were quite satisfied.

Our train pulled out shortly afterwards and for the next three weeks we remained on it doing garrison duty at Klip River. From Sept. 1st—Jam Saturday—until we were well out to sea on our way home, there

was lots of jam. Every evening when the Johannesburg Express came past our men were carrying out armfuls of it for the troops going down the line. At each meal a pile of tins were put on the floor of the car for general use and in a few days everything was covered with jam. The sides of the cars were so smeared that a loaf of bread flung against them would almost stick there. This state of affairs attracted flies and at times we almost regretted that the stuff had ever been brought in. Our feelings were well described by the immortal Peterson in the following lines:

“ Flies in the butter,
Flies on the ham,
Flies on Bobby Graham's face
Walking in the jam,
Flies buzzing round your ears
And in your nose and eyes,
But we're having such a jolly time
We don't mind flies.”

But we were glad of it afterwards, for when we started down the line we carried with us several hundred tins, and succeeded in getting one large box on board the ship. Tins of it adorned our mess table, the envy of other companies, and while they were eating soggy bread without anything to make it more palatable, we spread on it the strawberry, gooseberry and apricot, and blessed DeWet, the armoured train and Jam Saturday.

FIVE MINUTES ON AN ARMoured TRAIN.

"Brief life is here our portion."

OUR train was not of the regulation pattern, but as a proper one was not available, it had been built by General Chermiside to patrol his section of the line—from Kronstadt to Pretoria. It was composed of an armoured engine, officers' coach, guards van, three low-sided box cars,—one for the pom-pom or Vickers-Maxim, the others each carrying two Ross-Maxims,—three roofless box-cars for the riflemen, a van for the telegraph corps of engineers, and a small flat-car with tank containing our emergency supply of water. The armour with which all the cars, excepting engineers' and water tank, were protected, consisted of heavy sheets of steel plate backed by six inches of oak,—perfect protection from bullets, but of course useless against shell fire. Through this armour port holes were cut in the sides and ends of the box cars, and it was only by the entrance of a bullet through these that a man could be hit, unless indeed, we happened to come under fire at the foot of a hill, where the Boers might be able to drop their lead in the top of the car.

The escort to the train was: five men and an officer for the machine gun, fourteen Ross Maxim,

squad and officer for the quick-firing guns; and sixty men with officer, of the Royal Canadians, as riflemen. Our party was divided as follows: No. 1 Car, thirteen men, one corporal, one sergeant and one color-sergeant; No. 2, twenty men, one corporal, one sergeant; No. 3, twenty-one men and one corporal. No. 1 Car carried the stores as well as men, and in it we lived, moved and had our being, from July 20th until September 25th. It was an easy job—we used to say the snap of the whole war,—and while there the men regained all the flesh they had lost on the march to Pretoria. In the evenings we usually gathered in the car to talk about the war, and what we would like to eat; and were a stranger to drop in suddenly he might have found the conversation, if not very instructive, at least amusing.

“Weary, let’s challenge them to a game of whist.”

“All right, come on, you fellows.”

“Oh, no you don’t. Go and get some marbles or some easy, little game, and we will play you. There is no use in beating you all the time.”

“Cheese it, for Heaven’s sake! You know quite well we have won every game this week.”

“You have won? Why, last night our little man and I had six points before you got—”

“Some son of a gun has swiped my canteen. Which of you fellows took it? Don’t all speak at once. If I catch the man who took it, I’ll—”

“I saw a canteen drop over the side just as we pulled out of Vereeniging. What was your’s like?”

"Had two dents on the side and my name cut in the bottom. Some of you fellows lend me one for a few minutes."

"Fweddy, go on and make a little drop of tea. Sandy will give you some sugar."

"Make it yourself."

"I'll go for the water if you make the tea; come on now, and I'll never forget your kindness—not for a long time anyway."

"Pass the jam!"

"Hand me some of that hot stuff, Silver, please."

"Come and get it yourself. I'm not working today."

"Pass the jam!!!"

"Well, let me pass then. You don't mind if I step on you, father, do you? Gosh! There goes Silver's tea! That's what little boys get for not being obliging."

"Oh! There comes Trouble again; every time we sit down he begins wandering round like a lost sheep. Why in—?"

"Pass the jam!!!"

"Say, someone, kindly hand our little boy some jam. Here, darling, have a whole tin for yourself. Have two tins. Catch!"—Biff! Splash! and another canteen of coffee runs over the floor.

"Well, of all the clumsy brutes ever I saw you take the cake!"

"But supposing Buller does get to Lydenburg, he will lose half his men with fever and—"

"For goodness sake stop talking war, and give us something to eat. Heavens! My bread is gone. Sandy, give me to-morrow's rations, like a good boy; oh, please do, and I'll never ask you again."

Another man comes climbing into the car with: "Look out for me, I'm a coming generation. Did you fellows hear the news?"

"Yes, we heard it long ago, what is it?"

"The Royal Irish say that Ladysmith is relieved."

"Very likely, isn't it? Just about as true as the yarn those Northumberlands were giving us at Vereeniging—that Cronje had surrendered."

"Well! anyway, DeWet is surrounded below Rhenoster, and can't escape."

"Sandy, will you please count those marks on the side of the car just over your head, and tell us how many times DeWet has been captured?"

"But you knew her, didn't you? They lived on Pownal Street, between Grafton and Richmond. Her sister worked in—"

"As usual. Talking about girls."

"Say, Fweddy, what is your idea of Heaven?"

"Haven't got any."

"Oh! Fweddy! That is too bad. You should get an idea at once. No family should be without one. What's yours, Silver?"

"Eh! Oh! Mechanics Hall, ——— at the piano, and HER."

"Well answered, my boy, but just change the name of HER, and you come about right."

"What would you give for a good feed of oysters now?"

"Shut up! don't talk about oysters to me. My little man, please pass the pressed chicken, and if you have any lemon pie left—ah, none left; well then, another hard tack will do."

"What's the latest about going home, Gadget?"

"Nothing."

"Come on, now, tell us the latest telegram."

"I'll watch it. Last time I told you the news you would not believe it and it came straight, too. I'll carefully watch telling you any more news."

A loud shout from outside: "Fweddy! Fweddy! Here is the Johannesburg express, and there are girls on it too. Hurry up!"

A wild rush over the sides of the car; the train pulls up, stops for a moment or two, and then steams off. The boys scatter over the veldt; some to play quoits; others to talk to the Royal Irish; the cars are deserted, and the excitement of the day is over.



OUR CHUMS—THE GORDONS.

"Scots wha' hae wi' Wallace bled."

IN the British army there are five regiments which wear kilts, the Camerons, Gordons, Seaforths, Forty-Second or Royal Highlanders, and the Argyle and Sutherlands.

Another corps, the Highland Light Infantry, wore the kilt at one time but lost it at Waterloo. There are different stories current in the army regarding this event, but no one seems to know the true reason. One story is that, being in a tight corner, they dropped the kilts in order that they might be freer to fight. But some say that it was that they might run away the more easily. This last is not so likely to be true as the first, because the Highland Regiments are not as a rule trained to run away. However, the rhyme common in the army is:

"The H. L. I., the crazy crew,
They lost their kilts at Waterloo."

The Highland Brigade, which was formerly commanded by General Wauchope, but now by Hector MacDonald, is formed of the H. L. I., the Seaforths, Argyle and Sutherlands, and the 42nd—the famous Black Watch. In the South African campaign the

Cameron Highlanders were attached to the 21st Brigade with the Sussex, Derbys and C. I. V's., and the Gordons or "Gay Gordons," as they are sarcastically called, were with us.*

We saw them first at Orange River when we were building railroads. They marched from their camp to entrain for Modder River, and as we stood and watched them go past with their long, loose stride we thought what fine-looking men they were and tried to imagine how they would look in a fight. After that we never met them again until the 13th of February, when we were brigaded, and started from Graspan on the march to Bloemfontein. In line of column the regiments form from right to left in order of seniority, so that our brigade marched and camped with the Shropshires on the right, then Cornwalls, Gordons and ours. This formation made us far more friendly with the "Jocks" than we might otherwise have become, but another reason for the strange friendship was that the Gordons have no sister regiment in the army. Of course they are the wives of the Scots Greys, but the Greys are a mounted corps, and were not in our division, so the Gordons were all alone. The fact that we were in the same state formed a bond between us and it is seldom that two bodies of men from different parts of the world become such true friends as the "Jocks" and "Canucks."

*This article only takes into account the battalions with which we came in contact.

On the march to Paardeberg they were at first both angry and amused at the way we acted. While actually on the road our fellows moved along with such a long stride that the other regiments found it very hard to keep up, and, in fact, on the morning of the fourth day, instead of allowing our battalion to set the pace, Smith-Dorrien called out: "The Brigade will advance in line of column, the GORDON HIGHLANDERS directing." And then they had their revenge, for towards evening when we were getting pretty well used up, what should we hear but the whole bunch of pipers starting the "White Cockade." The step quickened in time to the music, but if the Gordons thought we were going to be left they were much mistaken, for our men went along as though it were only the beginning of the walk instead of the end. We finished in fine style and came in to the halting-place without a sign of fatigue, although we were all feeling played out. Then to get square with the others who were just as tired as we were, our boys started singing and dancing while supper was being cooked. That settled the business, for the Gordons thought that men who could march as we had done and seem so gay afterwards were all right and would make good companions. From that time until the end of the job one could scarcely tell when in bivouac which was our regiment and which the Gordons for they were always over talking to us, and our men of course returned the calls. Things went on in this pleasant way until

after the first day's fight at Paardeberg, when their good opinion of us was increased if possible by the way our boys acted under fire. The feeling they held for the "Indians" is well shown in a story told of a Cornwall and Gordon. In the fight of February 18th, the Cornwalls were held in reserve until the middle of the afternoon while we were in the firing line all day, and the Cornwalls accounted for this by saying that they were kept back in case the Canadians might run away. "What?" was the Gordon's answer, "You keep the Canadians from running away, why man it would take more than sixteen of your blooming lot to keep the Canadians from going back a step."

On our side as well as liking the Gordons both personally and as a battalion, we admired them. In an army like the British, where every man is a hero, it is almost foolish to say that any one regiment is braver than another but there are different styles of bravery. The ordinary British soldier will face death as calmly as though he were going to dinner, but the Gordons were always happy as well as calm and never lost their heads. On one occasion when they made a bayonet charge at Doorn Kop the Dutchmen lay behind rocks waiting for them and calling out all kinds of abuse. An officer of theirs tells that in the charge he saw a big sergeant finishing a man with a bayonet and heard the Boers shouting to him "Come on, you great big woman, come on, we wait for you." And the sergeant answered.

"Hoot, mon! Dinna fear, I'll be there a lot too soon for you." He was shot through the head a few seconds later.

In regard to former campaigns they have very little to say. Any one will tell you what sort of a country Egypt or India is, but when it comes to an account of any of their engagements they are silent. They alway say that too much praise was given to them for the charge at Dargai, and state that the other battalions did all the hard fighting before they took any part in it.

But even a simple statement like this cannot be got out of them easily. They are not boasters by any means and look upon others as just as good men as themselves. One evening, on the march to Pretoria, after we had finished a fairly stiff engagement in which the brunt of the work fell to the Gordons, we were lying in bivouac when they came marching back to take their place in column. They looked worn out, tired after the day's work, and were not in the best of spirits as they had lost a good many men, but just as the first of their line reached us our men burst into one loud, ringing cheer. At first the "Kilties" did not seem to understand what it meant, but when they saw that it was they we were cheering a remarkable change came over them. Rifles went up to the slope, their step quickened, chests were thrown out and the battalion went past as if on review before the Queen. Then as the other regiments in our brigade noticed

what was going on they took up the cheering and wild "Hurrahs" ran down the line. It was as great an honor as could be paid to any corps—to be cheered by their own companions, and they well deserved it. One of them speaking about it afterwards said that it was the happiest moment of his life and that if the Canadians only knew how much good it had done they would always feel pleased with themselves.

When we left them there were tears in many eyes and sadness was felt on both sides, but through it all we were proud that it had been our privilege to march and fight beside such men. Expressions of regret were heard on all sides and more than once has one of them told us that he felt far worse at parting from the Canadians than he did from his own folks at home. We felt the same.

As fighters they are perfect. As men the whole British army should be proud of them and as friends none could be truer or more kind hearted.

Our battalion has been disbanded, and as a fighting unit we will never more meet the Highlanders. They may forget us—I think not—but one thing sure is, that no man of the Royal Canadian Regiment will ever forget or fail to admire—not the Gay, but the grand Gordons.

* *

We've wandered mony a weary fit
Frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin' auld lang syne.

HOW WE ANNIHILATED THE TURK.

"A perfect creature, nobly planned."

IT was at Wolvehoek in the Orange River Colony that we first saw the bird, and surely "never lighted on this orb a more celestial vision." We had just come in from Heilbron, and were feeling quite happy after a severe engagement with a herd of springbok which resulted in a complete victory. The South Wales Borderers were doing garrison duty at Wolvehoek, and in some manner best known to himself one of them had commandeered or otherwise acquired a fine large turkey. At any time in the campaign turkeys were a rare sight, but to our astonished eyes here appeared a regular beauty—for that country to produce—weighing at least twelve pounds.

How were we to get possession of the fowl? That was the point that troubled us, and for a time all minds were concentrated on the all-important subject. As the affair turned out we need not have troubled ourselves about it, for the S. W. B's considered a turkey supper far beyond their wildest dreams, and such extravagance could not be thought of for a moment. Under these circumstances the only thing for them to do was to dispose of the

bird by auction or otherwise. So when we arrived, they were holding an argument as to the respective advantages of an auction or lottery. The latter method was decided upon, and they immediately started selling tickets at sixpence each—twenty-five tickets to be sold, which would give them better returns than a straight sale. Our fellows, with a fond recollection of old-time Christmas dinners, all started to buy tickets, in fact I would not swear that they did not decide to buy the whole twenty-five, but before this could be done our little man had closed with the owner of the turk and secured it for ten or twelve shillings. It was borne in triumph to the car and hung up on a peg in one end, while the crowd sat round and gazed open-mouthed at such a vision.

A meeting was at once held to consider what was to be done, and we appointed three men a committee of ways and means, who were to treat with anyone owning an oven at any station where we might stop for a few hours. For two days the bird hung in state in the end of our car, among boxes of biscuit, bully-beef and Maconochies rations, until in some minds came the fear that unless we soon found a chance for cooking, it might like riches, take to itself wings, for at that time of year the air was warmer than is absolutely necessary for the preservation of food. But just as though our General knew what was passing in our minds, orders came for us to proceed to Viljoen's Drift on the

banks of the Vaal—the one place on the whole line which we would have chosen had such been our privilege. In Viljoen's was a military bake shop, in which worked some very decent fellows belonging to the 5th Northumberland. They, we knew, would consider it no trouble to roast the turkey for us, but would rather feel pleased with the thought that while they were living on beef, another part of the army could indulge in turkey. Suddenly in the midst of our rejoicing an awful thing happened. Someone—it is better not to mention names—suggested that it might be an improvement on the supper if the bird were drawn and dressed. Let a veil be drawn over the first part of the operation. Our next consideration was what we were to use for dressing. Many suggestions were offered, but the mixture decided upon, and which any one of the boys can heartily recommend to persons desiring a recipe for dressing, was as follows:—Two army biscuits, finely powdered with a pom-pom shell, one loaf of bread crumbled as well as possible with the hands (our bread was too fresh and turned out lumpy), one packet of mixed spice, half pound of breakfast bacon partially fried, as much lard or any old sort of grease you can raise, two tins of Mac-onochie rations No. 4, with meat extracted, salt, pepper, etc. to taste. This must be well mixed in a bucket, moistened with one half pint of water and four rations of rum, and used as soon as possible. Our little man held the fowl between his

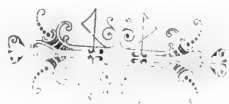
knees, the corporal inserted handfuls of the mixture and the strong man—who has been used to artillery work—rammed home with the handle of a bayonet. The cavity was closed by punching holes in each side with the marlinspike on our ammunition knives and sewing up with a strand of twine, taken from the sugar bag. While this was going on, our committee previously appointed had paid a visit to the bake shop and on returning reported that our suppositions were correct, the bakers being quite willing to undertake the task. So, with an oat bag wrapped round him as a protection from the sand storm then raging, we carried all that remained of the once proud gobbler to the shop, and with many instructions as to turning etc., handed him over to the cooks, not without misgivings as to his safety, but hoping for the best. We were told to come back at seven o'clock and take delivery of the bird.

The hours passed slowly. I can't remember ever spending such a long evening, and one would have thought that some of the men had lost their best friends. On most faces was that hungry look usually betokening a longing for the indefinite. One man in particular sat with open mouth and wide staring eyes, gazing at vacancy, till some person inserted between his teeth a piece of biscuit. Then the jaws came together with a snap, and the expression on his face was like that of one who has been having a pleasant dream, and suddenly awakes to find the dream true. But in an instant the expression

changed; the biscuit dropped on the floor, and with a smothered "Damn!" the poor soldier climbed out of the car and went to soothe his injured feelings with a cigarette.

But no two hours can last forever, and gradually the hands of the corporal's watch approached the appointed time. We called upon all the boys to form up, and with a quick, firm step walked over to the bake shop. There lay the turkey, on the cover of a dickshee, a lovely brown color and sending out a perfume far more pleasing than any attar of roses could have been. The Color bloke raised aloft over his head the cover containing our darling, and we formed in line. In front marched the band—an accordeon played by ——, next, Colors with the bird, and then thirteen of us headed by the corporal. The Dead March is not allowed to be played on service, and at any rate we would have found it too mournful for such a happy occasion, but we had the "Conquering Hero," "Maple Leaf," and "British Grenadiers." In triumph we marched to the car and climbed over the side. By mutual consent the corporal was chosen to do the carving, and it was done in a manner only acquired by long experience. Then of course, our little man, as owner of the bird, was called upon to serve it. It was an exciting moment, for after every one had received a share, we waited in suspense to hear what name would follow the inevitable "You only got a small share, have some more ———."

For the next twenty minutes not a word was spoken. It was not an occasion for much conversation, but do not suppose that it took us twenty minutes to eat our shares. Oh, no! Turkey is a luxury, and not to be made a meal of, so each man was given two large slices of bread, and in this way the banquet was drawn out. In silence a helmet was passed around, and every one excepting the Color-bloke—who was the guest of the evening—dropped a shilling in it. Then the money was handed over to our little man to repay him for the outlay incurred in the purchase, and we considered our duty done. The little man rose to make a short speech in reply to our action, but feeling like the rest of us,—too full for utterance, bowed and sat down. By now it was nearly bedtime, so blankets were spread in the car, and also outside by those who preferred the ground to a hard floor. One after another we lay down to sleep, and in a few hours the only sound to be heard was when some fellow would turn over in his sleep and remark, "Say, old man, if you can spare it, I would not mind having another piece of the breast."



DID WE LIKE IT?

"Everything is mere opinion."

AS an experience, Yes. As a year pleasantly spent, most emphatically, No! There was not much to like about the trip and few of our men would care for the experience a second time. None of us would willingly have missed it, but having seen practically all there is to be seen in a war we are quite content now to let others try it. We have fought, marched, and starved; have seen battles—lots of them—in so far as one really in action can see a battle; have performed the sad duty of burying our comrades; have been witnesses of brilliant bayonet charges and have attempted the same thing ourselves. We know what it is to stay awake on outpost duty with nerves strained to the utmost tension through the "lonely watches of the night," listening to every sound no matter how faint, and searching the darkness for any sign of a treacherous foe.

We have worn clothing in such a tattered state that it could not be said that we were dressed, but only partially covered.

The filth was abominable, and water to wash even our hands and faces was rarely seen on the march.

Many of our men suffered from fever, few have escaped sickness in some form or other, and is it strange that we did not see much fun in this? One experience we were denied, and happily so—we were never defeated in action, so cannot tell what it feels like.

The country through which we marched was monotonous. In the Orange River Colony the soil is dry and sandy with plenty of rock mixed among it. A sunburned grass intermingled with stunted Karroo bushes forms a coating over the veldt, and kopjes, "heaps of round iron-stones, piled one upon another, as over giants' graves," rise abruptly from the plain. The Boers tell us that anything will grow, but although we spent a good part of our time in that country we saw nothing but mealies and citron. Of course around the farm-houses where there is any attempt at irrigation, we found small vegetable gardens, but none of any account.

Wood is almost unknown, and all the houses are built of mud or corrugated iron. The homesteads themselves nestle in the valley between two kopjes. First the stone walls forming kralls for sheep or oxen, then the farmhouse, a square, one-storied building, usually of white-washed mud, with rough thatched roof, and at a short distance a number of Kaffir huts.

Over such a country as this we tramped for weeks, footsore and weary, bothered by flies, short of water, and hungry. We suffered both from the direct rays of the sun and the heat radiated from the earth—

against which latter our helmets were of course no protection. Our feet were blistered, limbs stiff and sore from rheumatism, and our shoulders chafed by the weight of our equipment. There was not so much pleasure in this as in a little summer stroll at home.

We would also have greatly preferred a clean bed in Canada to some of the spots on which we spent our few short hours of rest. In time of war, sleeping accommodations are very primitive, and the usual plan was to kick around on the ground in search of some little space less lumpy than the rest. Having found what was considered a suitable spot we spread our blankets and lay down. Until the middle of April we had for each man one small ragged blanket and a share of a rubber sheet, but while in Bloemfontein new ones were issued, and for the remainder of the job we enjoyed comparative comfort.

Our company, with the exception of a night or two in tents at Bloemfontein, and about two weeks in houses at Springs, were never under cover from January 22nd until October 1st. During this time we had the opportunity of testing the qualities of different kinds of soil in regard to their ability to furnish comfort at night, and the unanimous decision of our men is that a good big pile of rocks is by far the best. On grassy ground—which, by the way, is usually lumpy—one is compelled to lie straight and the whole weight of one's body comes on the

shoulders and hips. But on a kopje, it is easy, by a skillful handling of the rocks, only acquired by long practice, to work the body down among them so that every part takes its own share of the weight. In this way comfort is insured, and if the sleeper can find a suitable stone for a pillow the comfort is greatly increased by placing his arm in a bent position upon it and thus forming a rest for the head. But even this manner of spending a night is not quite as pleasant as in a good bed at home.

Nor was our food equal to hotel fare. It is quite true that when Tommy gets "all that's a-coming to him" he has more than enough, but the trouble is that he does not get it very often. The full day's ration consists of either $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. fresh meat, 1 lb. bully, or 1 tin Maconochie rations—with fresh meat or bully, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. vegetables is issued; 1 lb. bread or biscuit, usually the latter; $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. jam twice a week, $\frac{1}{2}$ gill rum ditto, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. tea per day, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. coffee, 2 oz. sugar and plenty pepper and salt. In addition to this, cheese or bacon may be drawn twice a week, two ounces of either being considered equal to a quarter pound of meat.

But it was only while on the armoured train that we got this amount of food. At other times rations were very short and we had to try all sorts of plans for keeping up our strength. While at Winburg we got one cupful of flour or half-crushed corn per day, and found it almost impossible to cook. As a matter of fact I myself have gone to the

refuse pits and after digging up sheepskins have picked from them the little lumps of fat which had come away from the bodies during the skinning process, and used that fat to fry the cakes made from the mealies.

Often on the march we came across patches of citron, half ripe, and filled up on them. But they were sickening things, and we grew to hate the sight of the stuff even in fruit cakes. This food was not equal to what we might be eating at home.

Very few Chinese laundries accompany the British army, and consequently we found it difficult to keep clean. Often the boys who had any underclothes would take them off and wash them in a river or pool, only to find on returning to bivouac that we were getting ready to move again. Then the wet clothes were put on, and after a few hours' marching through dust became as dirty as ever.

But in spite of all these discomforts there is a strong attraction in the life of a soldier. Where can one meet a finer class of men than in the British army, or where find more excitement than in battle? The very worst hardships only served to teach us how to appreciate comfort when we again found it. Many times throughout the campaign did we wish ourselves back in Canada, but never was anyone sorry for having come to Africa. We all knew that the experience was worth the hardship.

Among our men now, however, the general opinion is that one campaign is enough for any ordinary

man ; and that, although the fighting spirit is still strong within us, the next time a battalion leaves Canada for Foreign Service we will be quite satisfied to stand with the small boy on the street corners and shout with all our might :

GOD SAVE THE KING.

